

RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1954.The "C" Series Index Numbers.

Index numbers of retail prices ("C" Series) for the December quarter of 1954 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases<sup>a</sup>, December Quarter, 1954.

City.	Index Number.	Increase from Year Ended June, 1939.	Increase from December Quarter, 1953.	Increase from September Quarter, 1954.
		%	%	%
Brisbane ..	2,178	152.4	0.1	1.3
Toowoomba ..	2,191	157.5	-0.1	0.8
Rockhampton ..	2,198	155.3	-0.2	0.3
Townsville ..	2,275	149.5	-0.1	0.2
Bundaberg ..	2,161	157.0	1.1	0.8
Warwick ..	2,183	165.6	0.7	0.7

<sup>a</sup> Minus (-) indicates decrease.

The "C" Series index number for Brisbane in the December quarter of 1954 showed an increase of 1.3 per cent. in retail prices compared with their level of three months earlier. This increase followed two quarters with declining prices, and the net result of the fluctuations of the index number over twelve months was to leave it at approximately the same level as that recorded in the December quarter of 1953. The total change over the year was an increase from 2,176 to 2,178, a rise of 0.1 per cent. Corresponding increases during the years 1951, 1952, and 1953 were 25.1, 8.0, and 4.2 per cent. respectively. Index numbers for three of the other cities for which data are available were also very close to their December quarter, 1953, levels, but Bundaberg and Warwick, in which the indexes happened to be relatively low at the end of 1953, recorded increases in retail prices of 1.1 and 0.7 per cent. respectively during the twelve months.

In most of the cities, all sections of the index number shared in the increase recorded from the September to the December quarter of 1954, the rise being greatest in food and groceries. In Brisbane, food and groceries increased by 2.2 per cent., clothing and footwear by 0.8 per cent., house rent by 0.7 per cent., and miscellaneous items by 0.6 per cent. Taking into account the relative weighting allowed the various sections, approximately two-thirds of the total rise in the index was due to food and groceries, and about one-fifth to clothing and footwear. Compared with the pre-war (1938-39) index number of 863, Brisbane retail prices at the end of 1954 were about two and a half times as high, the increase being 152.1 per cent. at the end of 1953 and 152.4 per cent. at the end of 1954.

Percentage changes during the last quarter and since 1938-39 in food and groceries, clothing and footwear, and miscellaneous items are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases<sup>a</sup>, December Quarter, 1954.

City.	Food and Groceries.		Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1954.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1954.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1954.
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	186.9	2.2	278.2	0.8	109.8	0.6
Toowoomba ..	204.7	1.1	273.6	0.5	106.7	0.2
Rockhampton ..	179.1	-0.2	268.8	0.7	118.1	0.2
Townsville ..	173.0	-0.1	274.5	0.5	118.8	0.1
Bundaberg ..	180.2	1.4	269.5	0.6	104.0	-0.1
Warwick ..	199.8	1.1	279.8	0.8	113.3	0.0

<sup>a</sup> Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, increases were recorded during the quarter in the food and grocery index numbers for Brisbane, Toowoomba, Bundaberg, and Warwick. Of these, Brisbane recorded the largest increase (2.2 per cent.), chiefly because meat prices in the capital rose to a greater extent than in the other cities. The slight decreases recorded for Rockhampton and Townsville were due mainly to potato prices decreasing further in these two cities than in the other four. Other important changes in price were recorded for each of the six cities in tea which increased and bacon which decreased. Milk showed a seasonal decrease in price in all of the cities covered by the survey, except in Townsville where there was no change.

Clothing and Miscellaneous.

Increased prices for rayon frocks caused most of the increase in the clothing index numbers. Small rises also occurred in the prices of women's straw hats, aprons, and pyjamas. Prices of men's and boys' clothing remained practically unchanged. There was very little change in the miscellaneous items index numbers. Brisbane's increase of 0.6 per cent. was the largest among the cities covered, and this was mainly caused by higher charges for electricity.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index remained stationary in Bundaberg and Warwick, but in the other four cities increased by amounts ranging from 0.7 per cent. in Brisbane to 2.0 per cent. in Toowoomba.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in December quarter, 1954, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	1 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	9	1	0	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
Rockhampton ..	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	4		19	0		19	10 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
Townsville ..	1	0	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	5 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
Bundaberg ..		19	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{4}$		16	5 $\frac{3}{4}$		19	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$
Warwick ..	1	0	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	7 $\frac{3}{4}$		15	9 $\frac{1}{4}$		19	11 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	5

In relation to Brisbane, the prices of all groups together decreased during the recent quarter in the five provincial cities for which the index numbers are calculated. Townsville remained the dearest city of those included in the survey, but its excess over Brisbane prices decreased by 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. from September quarter. Bundaberg was again the cheapest of the six cities and the only one where retail prices generally were cheaper than in Brisbane.

The prices of food and groceries in each of the five provincial cities remained higher than in Brisbane, but during December quarter their excess over Brisbane prices decreased by amounts ranging from 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £ in Bundaberg to nearly 6d. in the £ in Rockhampton and Townsville.

Only small variations in the relative prices of clothing and footwear were recorded during the quarter. In the five provincial cities these prices are closer to Brisbane prices than those of other items, and during December quarter were slightly cheaper than in Brisbane in all of the cities covered by the survey except Townsville where only an additional  $\frac{3}{4}$ d. would have been needed to purchase clothing and footwear costing £1 in Brisbane.



Miscellaneous items are more expensive in all five provincial cities than in Brisbane. Bundaberg and Toowoomba prices were closest to Brisbane during December quarter, the additional costs in these cities being 3½d. and 4½d., respectively, in the £. In the other three cities the margins over Brisbane prices were somewhat greater, the extra cost in the recent quarter of items in this group costing £1 in Brisbane being 1s. 10½d. in Townsville, 1s. 5d. in Warwick, and 1s. 1¾d. in Rockhampton.

#### Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration has suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments since the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953.

State Industrial Courts in New South Wales, South Australia, and Western Australia have not made any basic wage adjustments since their declarations following the publication of index numbers for the June quarter of 1953. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, special legislation required the continuation of the automatic adjustment of wage rates in accordance with variations in retail price index numbers. Subsequent variations in the Melbourne index numbers caused a net decrease of 1s. in the basic rate for males up to the September quarter of 1954, but a rise of 1s. in the December quarter restored the original level. In Tasmania, where rates are also controlled by Wages Boards, an adjustment of 10s. which operated after the publication of the September quarter index numbers early in November, 1953, was cancelled from 9th December, 1953, and the rates remain at their August 1953 level.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September quarter of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females, and, following the publication of the December quarter 1953 index numbers, a further increase of 3s. for males and 2s. for females was made. The Court considered that the changes in the index numbers in each of the four quarters of 1954 did not indicate a significant economic trend and no basic wage adjustment has been made since 1st February, 1954.

#### Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

##### Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index ("C" Series).			Commonwealth Basic Wage.	State Basic Wage.			
	June Quarter, 1953.	September Quarter, 1954.	December Quarter, 1954.	Males. <sup>a</sup>	Males.	Females.	Date of Operation. <sup>b</sup>	
				£   s.   d.	£   s.   d.	£   s.   d.		
Brisbane	2,115	2,150	2,178	10   18   0	11   5   0	7   11   0	1. 2. 54	
Sydney	2,360	2,372	2,391	12   3   0	12   3   0	9   2   0	Aug., 1953	
Melbourne	2,279	2,273	2,281	11   15   0	11   15   0	8   16   0	Feb., 1955 <sup>c</sup>	
Adelaide	2,238	2,289	2,294	11   11   0	11   11   0	8   13   0	Aug., 1953	
Perth	2,290	2,512	2,502	11   16   0	12   6   6	8   0   3	28.7. 53	
Hobart	2,351	2,394	2,391	12   2   0	12   2   0	9   1   6	Aug., 1953 <sup>c</sup>	

a The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed to a large extent until August, 1953. For subsequent adjustment see above.

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BRISBANE.

4th March, 1955.

Table 1 - The "C" Series Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.
Brisbane .. ..	863	1,079	2,170	2,176	2,187	2,163	2,150	2,178
Toowoomba .. ..	851	1,092	2,191	2,193	2,204	2,197	2,173	2,191
Rockhampton .. ..	861	1,084	2,206	2,202	2,221	2,215	2,191	2,198
Townsville .. ..	912	1,119	2,284	2,277	2,304	2,288	2,270	2,275
Bundaberg .. ..	841	1,059	2,157	2,137	2,158	2,163	2,144	2,161
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	1,082	2,181	2,184	2,197	2,177	2,162	2,186
Warwick .. ..	822	1,073	2,178	2,168	2,180	2,180	2,168	2,183

Table 2 - Food and Groceries Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.
Brisbane .. ..	856	971	2,451	2,488	2,504	2,440	2,404	2,456
Toowoomba .. ..	814	1,010	2,487	2,496	2,516	2,498	2,453	2,480
Rockhampton .. ..	895	1,012	2,542	2,547	2,591	2,573	2,504	2,498
Townsville .. ..	955	1,057	2,647	2,660	2,703	2,666	2,610	2,607
Bundaberg .. ..	903	1,027	2,532	2,521	2,557	2,544	2,495	2,530
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	984	2,476	2,506	2,526	2,472	2,431	2,473
Warwick .. ..	846	1,000	2,534	2,523	2,549	2,541	2,509	2,536

Table 3 - Clothing and Footwear Retail Prices Index.

(Base: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended June, 1946.	Year Ended Dec., 1954.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1953.	March, 1954.	June, 1954.	Sept., 1954.	Dec., 1954.
Brisbane .. ..	829	1,454	3,120	3,110	3,117	3,117	3,109	3,135
Toowoomba .. ..	829	1,429	3,104	3,114	3,127	3,108	3,083	3,097
Rockhampton .. ..	845	1,477	3,098	3,089	3,092	3,089	3,093	3,116
Townsville .. ..	840	1,457	3,135	3,129	3,134	3,129	3,130	3,146
Bundaberg .. ..	839	1,447	3,089	3,092	3,094	3,081	3,081	3,100
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	831	1,454	3,117	3,110	3,116	3,114	3,107	3,131
Warwick .. ..	825	1,441	3,112	3,090	3,095	3,112	3,107	3,133